

Embassy of the United States of America
Public Affairs Section
Old Mutual Building
P.O. Box 30016
Lilongwe 3, Malawi



Tel: (265) 1 772-222/414/992
Fax: (265) 1 771-142

United States Agency for International Development

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Contacts: Mitchell Moss - Public Affairs Officer
Anna Sparks - Development Outreach and Communications Specialist, USAID
Mayeso Chirwa - Information Specialist

US Funds Conservation Project that Provides Community Benefits

On November 15, 2005 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded a US\$600,000 (MK 75 million) grant to African Parks (Majete) Limited to support an alliance between African Parks (Majete) Limited, a new Malawian non-governmental organization and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW). The Alliance will support community based natural resource management and promote and encourage conservation of wildlife and the habitat in Majete Wildlife Reserve. Communities surrounding the Reserve will be provided access to microfinance in order to develop income generating activities that support Reserve conservation efforts.

Most of the animals once found in Majete Wildlife Reserve, including the elephant and the black rhinoceros, were poached to extinction by the early 1990s, leaving only small populations of plains game, hippopotami and crocodiles. As a result, communities living adjacent to the Reserve had little or no incentive to protect the animals or maintain the animals' habitat in the Reserve as the Reserve provided no economic benefits to the surrounding communities. Communities viewed the Reserve as a source of cheap food (wild game) or firewood. As part of the Alliance's efforts to build community ownership of the Reserve, the Alliance is restocking the game in the Park and promoting the Parks' significant tourism potential given its close location to Blantyre. Members of the surrounding communities are being hired as game guards, builders, and camp workers to support this restocking effort.

Approximately 6,000 households in the communities around Majete will benefit from Alliance development activities which also include HIV/AIDS awareness activities and bed net distribution. Half of all the profits generated by the Reserve will be shared with the surrounding communities who will independently determine how the income will be utilized, i.e., new schools, water points, or even a health clinic.